

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 OES-06 L-03 IO-13 SSO-00 /033 W

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O R 190518Z APR 76

FM AMCONSUL BOMBAY

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6346

INFO AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

C O N F I D E N T I A L BOMBAY 0968

STADIS//////////

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: TECH IN US

SUBJ: TARAPUR: STATUS REPORT

REF: STATE 91415

1. IN COURSE OF SEVERAL CONVERSATIONS WITH SETHNA OVER WEEKEND I HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO GO OVER SOME OF THE POINTS DISCUSSED IN REFTEL AND WILL TAKE UP REMAINING POINTS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. WITH REFERENCE TO QUERIES PARA 2 REFTEL, SETHNA SAID THAT HE WAS IN PROCESS ON SATURDAY APRIL 17 OF REPLYING TO SIMILAR QUESTIONS PUT TO HIM BY INDIA'S WASHINGTON EMBASSY. AFTER A COUPLE MORE TELEPHONE EXCHANGES WITH BOTH HIM AND J.CJYSHAH HE PROVIDED THE FOLLOWING MATERIAL WHICH HE HAS LABELLED TELEX MESSAGE. INITIALLY, I UNDERSTOOD THAT THIS MESSAGE WAS A COPY OF AT LEAST A PART OF ONE HE HAD SENT TO THE INDIAN EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON. BUT ON READING IT (IT WAS NOT RECEIVED UNTIL LATE SATURDAY NIGHT WHEN I COULD NO LONGER CONTACT HIM CONVENIENTLY) IT APPEARS THAT IT MAY HAVE BEEN ADAPTED SOMEWHAT TO TAKE ACCOUNT OF THE WAY IN WHICH YOUR QUESTIONS WERE PHRASED IN REFTEL WHICH SETHNA SAYS IS SOMEWHAT DIFFERENT FROM PHRASING OF QUESTIONS RECEIVED FROM INDIAN EMBASSY. I MENTION THESE DETAILS MERELY TO POINT OUT THAT IF THERE ARE DIFFERENCES IN WHAT YOU GET FROM INDIAN EMBASSY AND FROM ME THEY PROBABLY ARISE FROM SETHNA'S ATTEMPT TO BE FULLY RESPONSIVE TO BOTH QUERIES WHICH HE BELIEVES ARE SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT. I WILL OF COURSE BE GLAD TO ATTEMPT TO CLARIFY ANY PROBLEM THAT THE USE OF DUAL CHANNELS MAY GIVE IN THIS INSTANCE.

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TEXT FOLLOWS:

A. LAST AVAILABLE CYLINDER OF FRESH UF₆ OF 2.66 ENRICHMENT CHARGED ON APRIL 8. CONVERSION OF URANIUM OXIDE OF THIS UF₆ EXPECTED TO BE COMPLETED BY FIRST WEEK OF MAY AFTERWHICH CLEAN-OUT OF CONVERSION PLANT WILL COMMENCE. WE EXPECT CLEAN-OUT TO BE OVER BY LAST WEEK OF MAY. IN THE MEANWHILE THE 792 AS PRODUCED FROM THE CONVERSION PLANT FROM THIS CYLINDER WILL BE PELLETISED, SINTERED AND CONVERTED INTO RODS IN THE FABRICATION PLANT BY END OF MAY OR FIRST WEEK JUNE.

B. WHEN WE STATED IN OUR NOTE OF 7TH APRIL TO YOU REGARDING COCHRAN TESTIMONY "BY FIRST WEEK OF APRIL THERE WILL BE NO STOCK OF FRESH 2.66 ENRICHED URANIUM" IT MEANT THAT THE LAST CYLINDER OF 2.66 WOULD BE CHARGED DURING THE FIRST WEEK OF APRIL FOR CONVERSION TO OXIDE WHICH IS THE POSITION.

C. REGARDING YOUR QUERY ABOUT FABRICATION OF THIS 2.66 OXIDE TO FUEL BUNDLES WOULD REFER TO ITEM ON E OF THE BACKGROUND NOTE SENT TO STATE DEPARTMENT ON 7TH APRIL COPY OF WHICH IS WITH YOU. AS STATED THEREIN, TARAPUR POWER STATION USES FUEL BUNDLES WHICH HAVE 36 FUEL RODS. OF THESE, 22 ARE OF 2966 ENRICHMENT, 11 OF 2.1 ENRICHMENT, AND 3 OF 1.6 ENRICHMENT. UNLESS, REPEAT UNLESS ALL THESE ENRICHMENTS ARE AVAILABLE FABRICATION OF FINISHED FUEL, IE, ASSEMBLY OF ALL 36 FUEL RODS IS NOT POSSIBLE. WE REPEAT THAT CAPACITY OF FABRICATION PLANT TOGETHER WITH CONVERSION PLANT IS 140/150 FINISHED TARAPUR TYPE FUEL BUNDLES PER YEAR. AS CONVERSION AND FABRICATION HAVE TO GO HAND IN HAND, THIS IS ALL WE CAN PRODUCE WITH THE FACILITIES AVAILABLE TO US AT THE NUCLEAR FUEL COMPLEX, HYDERABAD. PRESUME YOU HAVE UNDERSTOOD THE POSITION. IF NOT, SUGGEST YOU RING UP EITHER J.C.SHAH OR MYSELF. END OF TEXT.

2. COMMENT: I TOLD SETHNA WHEN HE GAVE ME SUBSTANCE OF ABOVE MESSAGE OVER PHONE THAT I HAD UNDERSTOOD FROM MY TALKS WITH HIM AND J.C.SHAH THAT RUN OF AVAILABLE 2.66 ENRICHMENT HAD BEEN COMPLETED IN FIRST HALF OF APRIL AND THAT PLANT WAS CURRENTLY SHUT DOWN FOR WASHOUT. HE STOOD BY TEXT OF ABOVE MESSAGE SAYING THAT HE HAD NEVER INTENDED TO CONVEY THAT IMPRESSION. HE SAID HE HAD MERELY TRIED TO EMPHASIZE THAT SUPPLY OF 2.66 ENRICHMENT FOR CONFIDENTIAL

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ENTRY INTO FABRICATION PROCESS WAS EXHAUSTED. IT MAY BE THAT J.C.SHAH HAD GIVEN ME THE IMPRESSION THAT WASHOUT WAS COMMENCING BEFORE MID-APRIL. POINT IS NOT A MAJOR ONE BUT IT ILLUSTRATES THE DIFFICULTY OF HAVING TO RELY ONLY ON TWO MOST SENIOR OFFICIALS IN THIS AFFAIR WHO ARE NOT REALLY THAT CLOSELY AWARE OF DATES AND AMOUNTS IN PRODUCTION SCHEDULE.

3. CONTINUING COMMENT: I AM NOT CERTAIN WHETHER THE INVITATION IN THE LAST SENTENCE OF SETHNA'S ABOVE MESSAGE IS INTENDED SPECIFICALLY FOR THE INDIAN EMBASSY OR ADDRESSED TO US OFFICIALS. IN ANY CASE, AS INDICATED IN BOMBAY 964, SETHNA IS QUITE WILLING TO DISCUSS THIS CONTINUING PROBLEM WITH KRATZER OVER THE TELEPHONE. HE WOULD, HOWEVER, APPRECIATE ADVANCE INDICATION THROUGH THE CONGEN OF THE SPECIFIC SUBJECTS TO BE COVERED.
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